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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Emergency assistance to the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 51/30 I of 17 December 1996, on emergency assistance to the Sudan, the General Assembly, inter alia, noting the declining contributions to the 1996 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Operation Lifeline Sudan despite progress made in the Operation, and noting also that considerable relief needs still remained to be addressed, in particular in the areas of non-food assistance, acknowledged with appreciation the cooperation by the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations and encouraged the continuation of that cooperation. The Assembly stressed the need for Operation Lifeline Sudan to be operated with a view to ensuring its efficiency, transparency and effectiveness, with the full participation of the Government of the Sudan in its management and operation. It stressed also the importance of assuring safe access to personnel providing relief assistance to all in need, and the importance of strict observance of the principles and guidelines of Operation Lifeline Sudan. In that connection, the Assembly urged all parties involved to continue to offer all feasible assistance, including facilitating the movement of relief supplies and personnel, so as to guarantee maximum success of Operation Lifeline Sudan in all affected parts of the country.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize and coordinate resources and support for Operation Lifeline Sudan and to report on the emergency situation in the affected areas and the recovery, rehabilitation and development of the country to the Assembly at its fifty-second session. The present report has been prepared in response to that request and covers the period October 1996-July 1997.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN THE SUDAN

3. Efforts were made during the reporting period by several of the parties to find peaceful solutions to the ongoing civil conflict in the Sudan. In spite of those efforts, however, fighting among the warring parties intensified, further destabilizing and degrading the lives of millions of Sudanese civilians. This has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, putting intense pressure on millions of people already living below subsistence levels. Widespread malnutrition and a spread in infectious diseases continued to affect populations at risk, especially those displaced by war. In addition, large parts of northern Sudan suffered extensive drought, placing more than two million Sudanese at risk of serious hunger.

4. The main constraints limiting relief efforts under Operation Lifeline Sudan related to restrictions imposed by one or more of the parties as well as funding shortages. In areas where relief aid was obstructed or reduced, there has been a depletion of assets, leaving entire communities without livestock, grain stocks or tradeable goods. The long-term trend towards disintegration of communal networks in war-affected areas throughout the south of the country and the transitional zone accelerated, raising the prospect of more internal displacement in a country which has the largest population of internally displaced persons in the world. The ability of at-risk populations to rely on

traditional coping mechanisms in order to survive can no longer be taken for granted. At this stage, the only way to prevent the onset of a life-threatening, uncontrollable humanitarian disaster is to increase urgently the levels of relief assistance and ensure adequate access to at-risk populations.

5. Although the number of locations accessible per month by air for humanitarian assistance showed a significant improvement in terms of overall programme impact, United Nations humanitarian efforts through Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to be severely constrained by the restrictions placed by the Government of the Sudan on the flow of relief assistance to populations in need. Restrictions on air and river access, suspension of Operation Lifeline Sudan flights, refusal to allow the use of Hercules C-130 aircraft, denial of permits to international staff to travel to Government locations in the south and the confiscation by Government security personnel of communications equipment significantly impeded the flow of relief assistance to at-risk populations in war-affected areas.

6. In June and July 1997, the situation improved when flight denials were reduced to 4 and 8 locations, respectively, from an average during the reporting period of 17 per month. Three barge convoys also received clearances in July from both the Government and rebel movements. In addition, an April and May suspension of the use of Hercules C-130 aircraft was lifted in mid-June 1997.

7. The outbreak of hostilities on the eastern border of the Sudan in January 1997 made it necessary to provide relief to new populations. Attempts by Operation Lifeline Sudan to conduct a needs assessment there were inhibited by the Government which, although it allowed the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations to visit Government areas some two months after the initial request, refused to give clearance for a United Nations team to visit areas newly occupied by the rebels.

8. In January 1997, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) launched a major offensive that began in southern Blue Nile state and by the end of July 1997 had reached Terekeka, 50 kilometres north of Juba on the Nile. The SPLA offensive forced thousands of displaced civilians to flee to Government locations. At the same time, tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees returned from their camps in northern Uganda to areas newly captured by SPLA. The intensification of the conflict led to an increase in restrictions on Operation Lifeline Sudan activities, including the unprecedented number of denied flight locations by both the Government and SPLA.

9. In retaliation for government restrictions, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) continued the practice, begun in 1996, of imposing its own flight bans on a limited number of locations. This further constrained the ability of Operation Lifeline Sudan to meet the needs of at-risk populations in conflict zones.

10. Operation Lifeline Sudan has attempted to reach 4.2 million target beneficiaries in southern Sudan, the transitional zone and the camps of displaced persons at Khartoum with food and non-food relief assistance. Although access restrictions and a severely reduced funding base inhibited

programme expansion, Operation Lifeline Sudan had notable achievements, including the increased use of overland routes for non-food items which led to improved cost-efficiency and a strengthening of programme monitoring. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations were able to rapidly respond to a series of life-threatening emergencies in southern Sudan.

11. The indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations by government aircraft continued throughout the reporting period. From August 1996 to July 1997, there were confirmed reports of 56 separate bombings of civilians in 30 locations. In the most serious incident, a village in Western Equatoria was strafed by helicopter gunships, killing 6 villagers, injuring 41 and destroying 30 houses and 2 churches. In another incident, aircraft bombed the displaced persons camp at Labone in Eastern Equatoria, wounding 10.

12. Relief personnel were detained and taken hostage by warring parties on several occasions during the reporting period. The most serious incident occurred in November 1996 when three expatriate staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and five war-wounded who had been discharged from the ICRC Lopiding hospital were taken hostage at Wunrok in Bahr el-Ghazal by forces loyal to Kerubino Kwanyin Bol. On 8 December 1996, after five weeks of detention, the three international staff were finally released. The activities of ICRC were suspended in the country at the time of the incident. They remain suspended and will resume only when the accusation levelled against ICRC, that the aircraft transporting the relief workers and war-wounded was carrying weapons and ammunition, is lifted.

13. United Nations agencies involved in Operation Lifeline Sudan embarked on major reforms during the reporting period as a result of the review of Operation Lifeline Sudan, which was presented in September 1996 to the Government, southern factions, donors and United Nations agencies during a series of meetings organized at Geneva by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The review represented the first independent analysis of Operation Lifeline Sudan in its then-seven year history. To date, more than half of the 26 general recommendations arising from the review have been implemented. Reforms included the introduction of cost-sharing at the Lokichokio base camp in northern Kenya; the transfer of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Unit from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs; the creation of several new management posts in the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector as well as within the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Unit; harmonization of Operation Lifeline Sudan assessment methodologies; and the introduction in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector of an integrated programme for internally displaced persons aimed at improving field coordination and protection. In addition, the International Advisory Committee on Operation Lifeline Sudan was formed with the aim of maintaining support for its activities through regular and periodic consultations. The Advisory Committee, which met twice during the reporting period, will continue to hold meetings twice a year.

14. During the previous reporting period, several major donors announced the withholding of contributions pending the findings of the Operation Lifeline Sudan review. Despite the management and programme reforms implemented by the United Nations as a result of the review, donor support for assistance

programmes in the Sudan improved only slightly, resulting in a major shortfall in financial resources. By mid-July 1997, only US$ 26.1 million, or 21.6 per cent, of the US$ 120.8 million requested by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the 1997 consolidated inter-agency appeal for the Sudan had been received. The reduced funding base of the United Nations limited the ability of Operation Lifeline Sudan to fulfil its mandate. Furthermore, the noticeable deterioration in the delivery of services led to declining confidence among the humanitarian partners of Operation Lifeline Sudan in its continued viability.

15. In September 1996, Vieri Traxler resigned as the Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan. He was succeeded in April 1997 by Robert van Schaik who undertook his first mission to the Sudan and to Kenya in June 1997. During his visit, the Special Envoy received commitments from the Government and southern factions to improve the operating environment for the humanitarian agencies.

16. The Sudan Peace Agreement signed between the Government and the former rebel movements of the South Sudan Independence Army/Movement (SSIA/M), the Sudanese People's Liberation Army-Bahr el-Ghazal (SPLA-BaG) and some other minor factions, which joined together into the new United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF), was enacted into law via a constitutional decree in July 1997. The decree created a coordinating council to administer southern Sudan during a four-year interim period, after which there will be a referendum on self-determination. This development raises the prospect of the large-scale return of displaced populations to areas under the control of UDSF, including Upper Nile and Jonglei. However, SPLA, the largest rebel faction, did not enter into negotiations on the Peace Agreement.

17. Efforts sponsored by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (formerly known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD)) to find a solution to the conflict in the Sudan made progress at the IGAD Summit meeting held in July 1997 when the Government of the Sudan accepted the 1994 Declaration of Principles as a basis for discussions and negotiations with SPLA. This development represented a step forward in reaching a set of mutually agreeable terms for negotiations. The Summit meeting requested the chairman of the IGAD peace initiative, as well as the parties to the conflict, to undertake measures conducive to an early resumption of negotiations.

18. In February 1997, UNDP established a conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery programme with the approval of both the Government and SPLA. The aim of the programme is to use the technical assistance provided by United Nations agencies as an instrument for conflict resolution. In July 1997, the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs sent an assessment team to Khartoum and Nairobi in response to a request by the Government to explore the technical aspects of a possible mine action programme. Decisions on the programme will be taken after the mission issues its final report in October 1997.

III. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND OPERATION LIFELINE SUDAN

A. General

19. Despite the constraints faced by the humanitarian agencies, Operation Lifeline Sudan and partner non-governmental organizations reduced the risk of widespread hunger in war and drought-affected areas, delivering 55,013 metric tonnes of food between August 1996 and June 1997 to approximately 2 million beneficiaries. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies also supported and coordinated a wide range of relief and rehabilitation activities in the sectors of primary health care, household food security, livestock health, water and sanitation, emergency education, children in especially difficult circumstances, gender and development, capacity-building, humanitarian principles and child rights. In support of these projects, 2,643 metric tonnes of relief supplies were delivered from the Operation Lifeline Sudan base at Lokichokio, as well as another 1,426 metric tonnes of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supplies from Khartoum.

20. As in the past, Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to be supported through the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Unit at Khartoum. The Unit was pivotal in the collection and dissemination of information about the humanitarian crisis to donors, participating agencies and governmental counterparts. The Unit also facilitated inter-agency operations and was responsible for monitoring the situation of displaced persons throughout the Sudan. The United Nation's Children's Fund continued its coordination and facilitation role as lead agency for the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector.

B. Political and military developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

21. General insecurity seriously affected areas with large concentrations of at-risk populations, especially northern Bahr el-Ghazal, northern Jonglei and eastern Upper Nile. The spread of the conflict put new populations at risk at the same time that security-related incidents resulted in major setbacks for ongoing relief projects.

22. In the Equatoria region, the Government captured Loronyo from SPLA in September 1996. Small-scale skirmishes continued in the region until January 1997, when SPLA, as part of a major offensive, captured a string of strategic towns south of Juba. Thousands of Sudanese fled to Juba and surrounding Government locations. At the same time, tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees returned to the Yei and Kajo Keji areas from camps in northern Uganda. During the second half of 1996, thousands of Sudanese refugees fleeing the conflict in the former Zaire returned to Western Equatoria, where they found safe haven in displaced camps.

23. Virtually all relief activities in the non-government areas of northern Bahr el-Ghazal were disrupted by militia acting under the command of Kerubino Kwanyin Bol. Using the town of Gogrial as a base, Kerubino's forces launched "scorched earth" attacks on surrounding villages, looting relief

supplies and burning grain stocks, homes and non-moveable supplies. These attacks, which frequently coincided with food distributions of the World Food Programme, have occurred on a regular basis since late 1993, with the result that tens of thousands of civilians have been deprived of consistent access to health care, education and other relief interventions. The capture of several garrisons by SPLA during its 1997 offensive resulted in more than 20,000 newly displaced persons fleeing into Wau and other government locations.

24. In June 1996, SSIA forces captured Akobo on the border between the Sudan and Ethiopia, where SPLA forces were active in support of a planned offensive into southern Blue Nile with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the umbrella group of opposition forces. To the west of Akobo, interfactional fighting between SPLA and SSIA forces subsided in mid-1996, allowing relief activities to resume in the surrounding areas. Fighting in these areas resumed in July 1997.

25. With regard to the Blue Nile, Red Sea Hills and Kassala areas, fighting erupted on the borders with Ethiopia and Eritrea between government forces and the combined troops of SPLA and the Sudan Alliance Forces (SAF), an armed group associated with NDA. During its January offensive, SPLA captured Kurmuk and Qeissan and moved towards Damazin, displacing between 40,000 and 50,000 people. International non-governmental organizations were denied access by the Government to the first needs assessment mission carried out in the area but were included in a second mission two months later. Between January and March 1997, SAF forces also attacked border areas in Red Sea Hills and Kassala, conducting raids against government garrisons. SAF troops also occupied the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee camp at Garora in Red Sea Hills, resulting in an estimated 12,500 Eritrean refugees crossing the border into Eritrea. Heavily landmined roads impeded access to the area.

Security incidents affecting relief personnel

26. From August 1996 to July 1997, 56 evacuations of relief personnel occurred from 30 locations served by the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector. Most of these evacuations resulted from militia activities, including aerial bombardments. In Bahr el-Ghazal, the most insecure area serviced by Operation Lifeline Sudan, relief personnel were evacuated on 30 separate occasions, with seven evacuations from Akobo, Upper Nile. Insecurity on road corridors, including landmines and banditry, also affected Operation Lifeline Sudan personnel. Numerous incidents of arbitrary detention by Government authorities and opposition forces also occurred, which jeopardized the security of relief personnel.

27. Concerns were also raised by an announcement by the Sudanese Information Minister on 2 April 1997 that personnel of international aid organizations operating without the approval of the Government in areas captured by rebel forces would be considered legitimate military targets by government forces.

C. Access restrictions

Flight clearances

28. Although the number of locations accessible by air for humanitarian assistance increased to a high of 167 in December 1996, the number of monthly flight denials by the Government increased from an average of 12 locations per month in the previous reporting period to an average of 17 locations per month between August 1996 and July 1997, reaching between 20 and 33 flight denials per month in the period between January and March 1997. The Government also suspended all WFP and UNICEF flights between 24 April and 14 May 1997 and all WFP and UNICEF flights originating from Lokichokio between 4 and 11 June 1997. During April and May 1997, the Government imposed restrictions on the use of the Hercules C-130 aircraft, critical for the delivery of food during the "hunger gap" months of May to August. Further difficulties arose when the Government granted written clearance for particular flights, only to have the aircraft returned mid-flight when Juba air traffic control denied permission for the aircraft to enter Sudanese airspace. The no-fly zone imposed by the Government over the area south of the Juba-Torit-Kapoeta and Juba-Yei-Kaya lines, which was first imposed by the Government from December 1995 until February 1996, was reimposed in May 1996 and remained in place until February 1997, when it was lifted. The no-fly restriction was reimposed for one month in April 1997.

29. SPLM refused flight clearances on 14 occasions from August 1996 to July 1997. SPLA also threatened to shoot down any aircraft attempting to land at Akobo, Jonglei, on 23 October 1996. The threat was withdrawn five days later. Of the 66 air corridors agreed upon in the 1994 IGADD Agreement, access to one was denied for eight months of the year while access to four other locations was denied for either one or two months.

Barge operations

30. Barge operations were similarly restricted. In May 1997, the Juba convoy originally scheduled to depart in January 1997 was cancelled owing to the failure to obtain clearances from the Government. As a result, approximately 420,000 people along the Juba corridor were deprived of food and 15,000 children under five years of age went without measles vaccinations, dramatically increasing their vulnerability to the disease. The cancellation forced WFP to resort to the expensive option of airlifts to supply Juba. Rebel factions also significantly impeded barge convoys and prevented the delivery of relief food aid to populations along river corridors. SPLA-United soldiers held up a barge convoy between Renk and Malakal in August 1996 and detained two government officials for seven days.

Road access

31. Landmines and ambush attacks were a constant threat to relief convoys travelling by road, in particular from Kenya and Uganda. From August 1996 to July 1997, 15 ambushes of Operation Lifeline Sudan vehicles occurred in the Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. Increased insecurity in northern Uganda during the second half of 1996 resulted in the frequent closure of the main transport routes to displaced camps in southern Sudan. In northern Sudan, WFP deliveries

of food assistance to refugees in Red Sea Hills also ceased owing to the presence of landmines on the area's main access routes.

Movement of personnel

32. Personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations were routinely denied travel permits by the Government. Between January and June 1997, WFP was only able to conduct 14 assessment missions although clearances had been requested for more than 25 locations. The April airlift to Juba, which had been urgently requested by the Government, was delayed by the failure to grant a timely travel permit to an international food monitor.

D. Internally displaced persons

33. Internally displaced populations living in government locations continued to be the most under-serviced constituency within Operation Lifeline Sudan. Efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to those populations were constrained by access restrictions, policies of the Government, limited donor funding and insecurity. The escalation of the conflict resulted in the displacement of additional populations, in particular those living along the borders with Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as in the southern states. In late 1996, thousands of Sudanese refugees returned to Western Equatoria to escape the conflict in the former Zaire, settling in camps in Ezo, Kotobi and Mundri. In the first quarter of 1997, tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees returned to the Yei and Kajo Keji areas in Eastern Equatoria from camps in northern Uganda.

34. Severe flooding in the greater Khartoum area in September 1996 devastated the four official camps for displaced persons and many other areas where they were settled. In response to an emergency appeal launched by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, donors contributed US$ 150,000 to help meet the urgent needs of 10,000 affected families. Subsequently, in order to prevent a repeat of the 1996 crisis, flood prevention measures were jointly implemented by the Government, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

35. Several initiatives to resettle displaced persons were undertaken. Persistent insecurity, however, undermined United Nations efforts in certain locations, including Juba. After the Sudan Peace Agreement was signed in April 1997, a limited number of internally displaced persons returned spontaneously to the Upper Nile region from Khartoum, although their reintegration was hampered by lack of employment opportunities, poor social services and insecurity. As was the case during the previous reporting period, efforts to resettle internally displaced persons in rebel-held areas were hampered by the combination of insecurity, and problems of transport and access.

36. Although the policy of the Government towards internally displaced persons remained unclear, in February 1997 the Government announced that the four official camps for displaced persons in Khartoum state, with some 350,000 residents, would be dismantled during 1997 and that the residents would either be relocated into "peace villages" elsewhere in Khartoum state or be resettled. As soon as the planned relocations were announced, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations sought the agreement of the Government on a set

of procedures to be followed during relocations. At the end of the reporting period, discussions with the Government were continuing. The Government's relocation plans were given further impetus after the signing of the Sudan Peace Agreement, when officials announced plans to relocate populations living in greater Khartoum into areas controlled by UDSF. It is expected that these relocations will begin after the rainy season is over in November 1997. Although members of the humanitarian community expressed concern about unsuitable relocations, it was widely recognized that the Sudan Peace Agreement may open the way for large-scale, long-term resettlement. Negotiations regarding appropriate preconditions and other policy matters are expected to continue throughout the year.

37. The urban planning policies of the Government for the greater Khartoum area continued to result in the demolition of squatter settlements on land allotted for residential purchase, albeit on a smaller scale than in previous years. During the reporting period, demolitions affecting thousands of families occurred in Takamul and Karton Kassala in northern Khartoum, in Angola in Omdurman, and Mayo City in southern Khartoum.

E. Non-governmental organizations

38. International non-governmental organizations continued to provide essential humanitarian services, including supplementary feeding, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, sanitation, water, food-for-work, education and household food security. As in previous reporting periods, non-governmental organizations served as the main implementing partners of Operation Lifeline Sudan. Although several new projects were begun by non-governmental organizations operating in government locations, their activities continued to be restricted and they continued to face difficulties in conducting special needs assessments. Although the expectations of the international community were raised with the April 1997 appointment of a new General Commissioner for the Humanitarian Aid Commission, bureaucratic changes did not occur as quickly as had been hoped.

39. In addition to delaying or denying entry visas, initial work permits and internal travel permits to international non-governmental organizations, the Government also attempted to introduce new uncompetitive bidding procedures for local food procurement by obliging humanitarian agencies to purchase food through government parastatals. After months of delay, during which at-risk populations in Kordofan and Darfur received no assistance, the Government agreed to more open procedures after strenuous interventions by the United Nations and donors.

40. As in previous years, non-governmental organizations working in rebel-held areas experienced restrictions on their humanitarian activities. The combination of the intensifying conflict and denials of air access resulted in 56 relocations and brought many assistance programmes to a standstill. Breaches of the ground rules by rebel factions also affected operations by non-governmental organizations. The compounds of non-governmental organizations were forcibly entered and goods were stolen at Pochala in Jonglei and at Tambura in Western Equatoria by armed rebel soldiers. On 15 May 1997, personnel of

Operation Lifeline Sudan were evacuated from Akobo in Upper Nile following a steady build-up of violations of the ground rules, including restrictions on the use of communication equipment.

41. In response to recommendations arising from the review of Operation Lifeline Sudan, a meeting was held in January 1997 for members of the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector consortium which comprises two United Nations agencies (WFP and UNICEF) and more than 35 non-governmental organizations, with the aim of formulating a common approach to major policy issues. Agreement was reached on specific measures to improve programme quality, including criteria for membership of Operation Lifeline Sudan, sectoral and regional strategies, and a recommitment to Operation Lifeline Sudan principles and indigenous capacity-building. In the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector, steps were taken in 1997 to address operational problems by developing common strategies under the auspices of the newly created Humanitarian Aid Forum.

F. Relief food assistance

42. The crop and food supply assessment mission conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP in November 1996 forecast total cereal production at 5.3 million metric tonnes in 1996/97, higher than the bumper harvest of 1994/95. Total production was confirmed at 5.4 million metric tonnes by an FAO mission in April 1997. The crop and food supply mission reported that production would be concentrated in the traditional surplus producing regions, including the eastern states. The report warned that drought-prone areas, including Kordofan, Darfur and Red Sea Hills states, would continue to suffer from serious food deficits. The report concluded that persistent insecurity in southern Sudan and the transitional zone would continue to negatively affect food security and result in widespread hunger.

43. On the basis of the Operation Lifeline Sudan and FAO/WFP crop and food supply missions, emergency food requirements for 1997 were estimated at 78,650 metric tonnes for 2.6 million beneficiaries, including 2.2 million in southern Sudan. Emergency food needs for the northern sector were estimated at 31,922 metric tonnes, while southern sector relief food needs were estimated at 46,728 metric tonnes. A portion of this food was to be provided by non-governmental organizations. Funds to cover WFP food requirements, estimated at 24,781 metric tonnes, were requested in the 1997 Inter-agency consolidated appeal launched in February 1997. In April 1997, WFP allocated an additional 2,850 metric tonnes to assist approximately 50,000 people suffering from severe food deficit in the drought-affected northern states.

44. The constraints placed upon food assistance programmes resulted in only 24 per cent of projected needs in the northern sector and only 36 per cent of projected needs in the southern sector being met by WFP. It was nevertheless able to mount several emergency airlifts to Juba and Wau between April and July 1997. One hundred and twenty metric tonnes of UNICEF food and seeds were also delivered by air.

45. After the visit of the United Nations Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan in June 1997, WFP submitted a revised proposal to the

Government for four barge convoys to cover accessible locations along all major river corridors, serving over 650,000 beneficiaries. Three of the convoys departed in mid-July 1997 and another was expected to depart in mid-August.

G. Non-food assistance

46. Emergency supplies were provided by UNICEF to newly arrived refugees, displaced persons, returnees and flood victims throughout Sudan despite the difficulties encountered in delivering non-food assistance to many areas. The Fund nevertheless continued capacity-building projects for Operation Lifeline Sudan counterparts, community-based groups and indigenous non-governmental organizations. Under the humanitarian principles programme, UNICEF and Sudanese counterparts held 20 workshops in southern Sudan and Kenya with the aim of raising awareness on protection issues. The Fund also continued to encourage gender sensitivity in sectoral programmes. The UNICEF northern sector strengthened its planning, monitoring and evaluation capacities and also aimed at strengthening subnational mapping of social indicators. Activities in specific sectors are described below.

Health

47. Diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and acute respiratory infections continued to be major causes of mortality and morbidity in southern Sudan, the transitional zone and the camps of displaced persons at Khartoum. Endemic tropical diseases increased in both number and severity, some growing to epidemic levels. An estimated 4.2 million people were reached with basic health services: 3.4 million in southern Sudan, 445,000 in the transitional zone and 395,000 in greater Khartoum. As in previous reporting periods, UNICEF provided essential medical supplies and training to health facilities in Government and rebel-held areas.

48. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies and counterparts worked to control, treat and prevent outbreaks of several diseases prevalent in the Sudan. Overall coordination, support and supplies for the treatment of diseases, such as severe diarrhoea, cholera, malaria, measles and polio, was provided by UNICEF. Occasional measles outbreaks were controlled with mass immunization campaigns. Polio immunization was also accelerated. Médecins sans frontières (Netherlands) continued to coordinate a treatment programme for kala-azar, with more than 640 new cases treated between April 1996 and April 1997.

49. Southern Sudan is reported to have some of the world's highest rates of tuberculosis, river blindness and guinea worm. Completion rates of tuberculosis programmes dropped from 85-95 per cent to below 75 per cent, while default rates rose to more than 25 per cent from an average of 5 per cent during the previous reporting period. More than 75,600 cases of river blindness were treated in 1996 and 14,680 in the first quarter of 1997. In 1996, more than 120,400 guinea worm cases were reported in 5,462 villages, although the actual number of cases is believed to be much higher. Approximately 248,000 filter cloths were distributed for water filtration.

50. Sleeping sickness, 100 per cent fatal if untreated, has become endemic in parts of Western Equatoria. Limited access to medical facilities and the prohibitively expensive cost of treatment increase the likelihood of the disease spreading to new populations. During 1996-1997, the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS), in cooperation with UNDP, facilitated preparations for the development of a nationwide programme on acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in the Sudan. By the end of the period, small-scale AIDS awareness programmes were under way in many locations.

Household food security

51. In 1997, UNICEF distributed 630 metric tonnes of seeds and 134,000 hand tools to an estimated 116,000 households in southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan. The 1996 seed swap programmes were less effective than in 1995 owing to extensive flooding. New programmes included seed multiplication farms in Malakal and Southern Kordofan and an agricultural training curriculum for Western Equatoria. More than 460 schools in southern Sudan and Southern Kordofan were assisted in developing school gardens.

52. During the period under review, 1.3 million cattle were vaccinated against rinderpest in southern Sudan and the transitional zone. In government areas, UNICEF trained 160 vaccinators and 15 community-based animal health workers. In areas served by the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector, UNICEF and nine Operation Lifeline Sudan non-governmental organizations provided training, supervision and equipment for over 400 community-based animal health workers.

Emergency education

53. To promote the education of girls, 3,000 girls in government locations received school uniforms and birth certificates. A school feeding project, jointly managed by UNICEF, WFP and the Federal Ministry of Education, effectively reduced school drop-out rates in 25 schools in Government towns in southern Sudan. More than 1,180 primary school teachers in rebel-held areas received training during 26 courses held between August 1996 and July 1997. Basic education materials were provided to 1,412 primary schools in both government and rebel-held areas.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

54. In the first reunification programme carried out in SPLA areas, 168 children were reunited with their families in Rumbek and Yirol counties in September 1996. Another 306 children were flown home to their families in Aweil, Tonj, Wau, Rumbek and Yirol counties in December 1996, bringing the number of children in southern Sudan reunified with their families since 1992 to over 1,700. Family tracing and educational support for an estimated 3,000 unaccompanied children living in displaced camps in SPLA areas was continued by UNICEF and its programme partners.

55. In 1996, through assistance provided by the UNICEF northern sector, 216 children living in a camp at Abu Dom, Khartoum, were reunited with their families living in areas of southern Sudan and the transitional zone, as well as

Khartoum. A review of the reunification process is under way. In June 1997, Abu Dom camp was closed and more than 200 children were moved temporarily to the Soba National Reception Centre in Khartoum, where they will remain pending reunification with their families. The UNICEF northern sector also coordinated the reunification of 300 displaced children with their families in Southern Darfur.

Water and sanitation

56. In government areas, UNICEF drilled and installed 11 new boreholes, repaired 175 handpumps, installed seven new handpumps and trained 55 handpump mechanics. It also installed more than 775 household and 3 school latrines. In rebel-held areas, the water team of Operation Lifeline Sudan repaired over 600 handpumps and dug 6 new wells. Efforts continued to ensure that water supply management and hygiene awareness were incorporated into primary health care coverage.

Nutrition

57. Nutritional conditions in parts of southern Sudan continued to deteriorate in 1997, with unacceptably high malnutrition rates ranging from 16 per cent in Juba to 50 per cent in Bahr el-Ghazal. UNICEF and its partner agencies provided nutritional input in the form of UNIMIX, high-protein biscuits and vitamin A capsules in southern Sudan, Southern Darfur and Southern Kordofan. The nutritional needs of 40,000 malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women in the Khartoum displaced persons camps were addressed by the Adventist Development Relief Agency. During the reporting period, the UNICEF northern sector produced and distributed 823 metric tonnes of UNIMIX to 30,000 beneficiaries each month in government areas of the South and the transitional zone.

H. Assistance to refugees

58. By end-June 1997, a total of 386,847 refugees, mainly from Eritrea and Ethiopia with small numbers from Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, were under the protection of UNHCR. Of these, 152,874 were living in 26 camps in eastern Sudan, receiving assistance insofar as water, health, food and education. Eritrean refugees remained the largest group in the Sudan, with 132,327 individuals receiving assistance in camps and an estimated 195,331 living in urban centres. Of the more than 44,000 Ethiopians estimated to be residing in the Sudan, 14,815 receive assistance in the UNHCR camps. The remaining 30,000 Ethiopians are self-settled in large urban areas including Khartoum, Kassala, Gedaref and Port Sudan.

59. It is estimated by UNHCR that 4,400 refugees from Chad, 100 from Somalia and 9,600 from Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere also reside in the Sudan. Except for the estimated 4,400 Chadians living in western Darfur, most of the refugees are self-settled in urban centres and, therefore, do not receive assistance from UNHCR and other aid agencies.

60. By June 1996, 56,647 refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to Ethiopia under the auspices of the UNHCR operation begun in 1993. Another 6,961 Ethiopians and 75 Eritreans were repatriated during the first quarter of 1997. The Eritrean repatriation programme, begun on a pilot basis in 1994 and suspended in June 1995, continued to flounder. In May 1997, after the Government of Sudan had cleared the major obstacles to the resumption of the operation, the Government of Eritrea expelled all international staff from UNHCR offices at Asmara and Teseney. Despite high-level interventions by UNHCR with the Eritrean authorities, the operation remained suspended at the end of the reporting period.

61. The intensification of the civil conflict in Sudan and the spread of insecurity in neighbouring countries resulted in influxes of refugees and returnees into southern Sudan during the first half of 1997. An estimated 1,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 75 Ugandans arrived at Juba during that period. As has been the case in the past, refugees and returnees, including those at Juba, received assistance under the Operation Lifeline Sudan umbrella. In May 1997, UNHCR headquarters fielded a mission to review the conditions of Sudanese returnees. The report indicated that approximately 50,000 refugees had returned, mostly to areas occupied by SPLA, and it was recommended that UNHCR staff be seconded to the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector in order to ensure that adequate protection was provided to the returnees.

62. During the military offensive launched by Sudanese opposition forces in Red Sea Hills, the Garora camp, host to approximately 12,500 Eritrean refugees, was occupied. A joint mission of UNHCR, WFP and the Commission for Refugees in June 1997 confirmed that the refugees living at Garora had either returned to Eritrea or had dispersed into the surrounding mountains.

IV. ACTION TAKEN BY MEMBER STATES

63. In addition to the activities described above, several Member States have provided information on action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/30 I.

64. The Government of Italy has contributed Lit 1 billion to UNICEF for a social and health programme.

65. During the biennium 1996-1997, the Government of Ireland has provided a total of £Ir 526,000 for emergency assistance in the Sudan.

66. During the period June 1995-June 1997, the Government of Sweden has provided SKr 68 million for emergency assistance to the Sudan, inter alia, in the following areas: protection and humanitarian assistance; water, sanitation and transport support; refugee care and maintenance; repatriation; and education. Of this amount, SKr 23 million was allocated during the period January-June 1997. The main implementing partners have been UNICEF, UNHCR and ICRC.

67. The Government of Switzerland provided a total of SwF 4,500,520 in humanitarian assistance to the Sudan in 1996.

68. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has contributed a total of £2,686,115 in 1997 to the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations for food aid, non-food humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation assistance and assistance to Sudanese refugees in Uganda and elsewhere.

V. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

69. Previous reports have highlighted the important achievements and implications of Operation Lifeline Sudan as an effective instrument of humanitarian policy in times of internal conflict. The continued relevance of this operation for war-affected and other displaced persons in the Sudan was unequivocally reaffirmed in late 1996 by both United Nations humanitarian agencies and the independent team of experts which, from November 1995 to August 1996, undertook the first independent review of Operation Lifeline Sudan in its then seven-year history.

70. Despite positive cooperation at many levels with both the Government of the Sudan and the rebel movements, the activities of Operation Lifeline Sudan have been restricted by certain policies and tactics of obstruction designed to impede the flow of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations in need. In that context, the work of Operation Lifeline Sudan Coordinators at Khartoum and at Nairobi, as well as the Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan, has been vital for preserving a framework of cooperation on humanitarian issues among all of the national and international partners in Operation Lifeline Sudan. This framework of cooperation has evolved over the years to a point where, as reflected in the Operation Lifeline Sudan agreements of March and May 1994, the parameters for humanitarian action in the Sudan must continue to be of a tripartite character if war-affected civilian populations are to be equitably and effectively assisted through international humanitarian action. It is within those parameters, moreover, that specific modalities for the participation of the parties must be established.

71. Failure to consistently recognize the strictly neutral and impartial humanitarian mandate of United Nations relief agencies represents a threat to a successful continuation of Operation Lifeline Sudan. While the principle of United Nations humanitarian action has always been endorsed by the parties, the effect of restrictions imposed on Operation Lifeline Sudan activities has on occasion been so drastic as to call into question the viability of the operation. As documented in the present report and in previous reports, these restrictions relate primarily to access by Operation Lifeline Sudan to needy populations, whether in the form of relief flights from the base at Lokichokio into southern Sudan, humanitarian action in favour of the over 2 million internally displaced persons living in and around greater Khartoum, or permission to assess the conditions of civilian populations in the Nuba Mountains or in new areas of need created as a result of a resurgence of hostilities. The attention of the General Assembly is once again drawn to these issues.